**The Christ of Christmas Present**

**John 14 and various other scriptures**

In Charles Dickens classic, “A Christmas Carol,” the ghost of Christmas present came and visited Ebenezer Scrooge to show him how things were right then and in that same spirit we will explore the Christ of Christmas present. His birth and life on earth, I have called Christmas past, that was the season of Christ sharing in our humanity. Today He is not with us in the flesh, but we still see Him and we can still know Him. Much like we don’t need a Christmas tree and presents to have Christmas spirit, so we don’t need Christ, in the flesh, to know and have Him in our presence. As Peter preached at Pentecost:

32 “God raised Jesus from the dead, and we are all witnesses of this. 33 Now he is exalted to the place of highest honor in heaven, at God’s right hand. And the Father, as he had promised, gave him the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us, just as you see and hear today. 34 For David himself never ascended into heaven, yet he said,

‘The Lord said to my Lord,

 “Sit in the place of honor at my right hand

35 until I humble your enemies,

 making them a footstool under your feet.”’[g]

36 “So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!”

37 Peter’s words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”

38 Peter replied, “Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God.” 40 Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation!”

41 Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all.

Acts 2:32-41 NLT

Today we are going to explore how, it is that, we enjoy the presence of Jesus in the present day?

Believers enjoy the real presence of Christ through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. As Romans 8:10-11 records:

10 And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God. 11 The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

Romans 8:10-11 NLT

And as Peter wrote in 1 Peter 1:3-12:

3 All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, 4 and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. 5 And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see. 6 So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. 7 These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world. 8 You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. 9 The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls. 10 This salvation was something even the prophets wanted to know more about when they prophesied about this gracious salvation prepared for you. 11 They wondered what time or situation the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about when he told them in advance about Christ’s suffering and his great glory afterward. 12 They were told that their messages were not for themselves, but for you. And now this Good News has been announced to you by those who preached in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen.

1 Peter 3:1-12 NLT

So if we haven’t seen Him, and we do not see Him now, how do we know Jesus?

We know His presence because of the wind He makes, or what we might call His Spirit or His breath.

When Peter says, “the Spirit of Christ in them,” he means that the breath of God’s Chosen One is in them. Believers, metaphorically speaking, are breathing different air than unbelievers. Jesus is on the throne in heaven, while at the same time, even this Christmas, God is giving His life breath to those who have put their faith in Him. For those who believe, Christ is in us. The moment we believe God gives us His Spirit, we have everything we need for life and godliness as Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3:

2 I want you to remember what the holy prophets said long ago and what our Lord and Savior commanded through your apostles. 3 Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires. 4 They will say, “What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created.” 5 They deliberately forget that God made the heavens long ago by the word of his command, and he brought the earth out from the water and surrounded it with water. 6 Then he used the water to destroy the ancient world with a mighty flood. 7 And by the same word, the present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire. They are being kept for the day of judgment, when ungodly people will be destroyed. 8 But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. 9 The Lord isn’t really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.

2 Peter 1:3-9 NLT

This Christmas, today even, if you’ve put your faith in Jesus, His Spirit, His very life breath is the air you breathe for living a fruitful and effective life. Recognize Jesus’ Spirit in you, take normal breaths, take deep breaths, and I would suggest even asking God for the equivalent of extra oxygen rich breaths. This is the best analogy I can use to understand the meaning of Christ in us. We don’t see Him, but our whole life is sustained by Him, it is in Him that we live and move and have our being. The disciples had seen Jesus walk with them, talk with them, be crucified, and resurrected, He came to them and told them that they would be shepherds of His sheep. In order to do that He was going to give Himself to them.

That brings me to the question of “How can we see Jesus this Christmas?”

Peter wrote to the people of his day:

8 You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. 9 The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls.

1 Peter 1:8-9 NLT

This is true of us as well, we have not seen Him, and we do not literally ‘see’ Him now. But we can know Him, believe in Him, and rejoice in what He is doing because we believe in what Jesus is doing is saving our soul. Just as we have expectation about there being good gifts in our Christmas packages, so we expect that Jesus will obtain for us the outcome of our faith. We can expect that the Spirit of God who lives in us will work in us. Let me share a few ways you can recognize the work of Jesus, that happens through His Sprit in us.

First of all He regenerates you, that is a fancy word for making you new. You can recognize the person of Jesus in your life if you recognize that your life has changed. Agreement with the Apostle Paul is the first way you recognize Jesus’ cleansing, life changing presence in your life.

3 Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other. 4 But—

When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, 5 he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.[a] 6 He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. 7 Because of his grace he made us right in his sight and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life.

Titus 3:3-7 NLT

We can only know that we have been regenerated if we have been led to repentance. The evidence of regeneration is that God convinces us that our life was bent to sin and that prior to the moment of our new birth our sinful, selfish life felt perfectly normal and wasn’t even something that bothered us all that much. **(Expect to be made new. And if you and I are going to be made new we must expect to see our need for and desire for repentance)**

**He teaches you**. In John 14:26 Jesus is recorded as saying:

26 But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.

John 14:26 NLT

At one time you believed that the world started from some independent act of nature. Life was without purpose and you didn’t really have anyone or anything worthwhile to worship (live for). Through study of the Bible and the influence of other Christians the Holy Spirit taught you that you were created by God for His purposes. You haven’t been brainwashed by ignorant Christians, Jesus Himself has taught you to believe in things you formerly didn’t understand. **(Expect to be taught, which takes humility and setting aside your pride).**

That goes right along with the next way you can know the Christ of Christmas present, He speaks truth to you. Let’s say day to day…

You have a tendency to believe that you are unlovable, maybe you have these nagging feelings that you are a good for nothing loser, but when those feelings come up the Holy Spirit tells you that you are God’s workmanship created in His image and that you are more than a conqueror in Christ.

Jesus through His presence, in our lives, **guides us, He intercedes for us, He commands us, and He convicts us**. Just as in Acts 2 when Peter preached Christ

37 Peter’s words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”

38 Peter replied, “Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:37-38 NLT

As Oswald Chambers wrote conviction and repentance is one of the surest ways that we can recognize God in our lives.

“…it is only the forgiven man who is the holy man, he proves he is forgiven by being the opposite to what he was, by God’s grace. Repentance always brings a man to this point: I have sinned. The surest sign that God is at work is when a man says that and means it. Anything less that this is remorse for having made blunders, the reflex action of disgust at himself. The entrance into the kingdom is through the panging pains of repentance crashing into a man’s respectable goodness; then the Holy Ghost, who produces these agonies, begins the formation of the Son of God in the life. **The new life will manifest itself in conscious repentance and unconscious holiness, never the other way about.**”

**(Expect to hear the truth, which may be a little painful from time to time)**.

I pray that you would recognize Christ this Christmas. We don’t see Him, but we can know Him, follow Him, obey Him, and walk with Him by His Spirit. Recognize Jesus as your life breath and ask for more and more oxygen rich air. Put God’s Spirit at the top of your Christmas wish list, ask and He will be given to you, as Jesus once said:

11 “You fathers—if your children ask[a] for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? 12 Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! 13 So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.”

Luke 11:11-13 NLT

Jesus is no longer lying in a manger. He is no longer on the cross, or in the grave. But He is still hard at work in the world, especially in the hearts of those who believe. Part of me wants to tell you that Jesus came to make all of your wildest dreams come true. But we should expect something a lot less comfortable and a whole lot better.

When the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Future came to visit Ebenezer Scrooge they weren’t coming to give a pat on the back. They were coming to bring about a change in his heart. As Christians…

Expect to be made new

Expect to see our need for and desire for repentance

Expect to humble ourselves and be taught

Expect Jesus to guide us

Expect Him to Intercede for us

Expect Him to command us

Expect God’s Spirit to convict us

Expect to need Jesus’ forgiveness

Expect to be loved and saved by God, as Jesus said:

16 “For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. 17 God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

18 “There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God’s one and only Son. 19 And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. 20 All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. 21 But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants.

John 3:16-21 NLT

And put all of your faith in Jesus, who is God among us, who now lives in us and among us by the presence of His Spirit.

Just as Matthew quoted the prophet Isaiah:

23 “Look! The virgin will conceive a child!

 She will give birth to a son,

and they will call him Immanuel,

 which means ‘God is with us.’”

Matthew 1:23 NLT